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RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 3099
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 00832

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED TEXT)

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM ASEC ZI
SUBJECT: TSVANGIRAI BRIEFS DIPLOMATS ON MDC DISENGAGEMENT

REF: HARARE 826
Classified By: CDA Donald Petterson for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)
SUMMARY

11. (SBU) A resolute Morgan Tsvangirai briefed diplomats on October 16 on the MDC's intention to disengage from ZANU-PF until progress is made on the Global Political Agreement (GPA). Commenting that what he termed a "constitutional crisis" had been precipitated by the rearrest of Roy Bennett, Tsvangirai said the current situation went beyond Roy Bennett and was the result of a "dishonest and unreliable" partner that had frustrated implementation of the GPA. Negotiations would need to take place to result in substantial fulfillment of the GPA; if this did not happen and the crisis escalated, the MDC would push for internationally-supervised elections. Tsvangirai urged international pressure on ZANU-PF, particularly from the region. He refrained from criticizing Mugabe, but acknowledged Mugabe had a responsibility to control his party. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Following the rearrest of Roy Bennett and the denial of bail on October 15, the MDC met and resolved to disengage from ZANU-PF at the cabinet level (Ref). Tsvangirai held a press conference today to explain the MDC's position, and then briefed diplomats. His remarks regarding ZANU-PF and the GPA were his most direct to date.

An Obdurate ZANU-PF

13. (SBU) The current crisis, according to Tsvangirai had been precipitated by the "persecution by prosecution" of Bennett because he was white and part of the MDC leadership. But in standing up for Bennett, Tsvangirai added, the MDC was not pandering to the West. Rather, Bennett was part of a larger issue--failure of ZANU-PF to implement the GPA.

¶4. (SBU) Tsvangirai said he supported the GPA and had done everything in his power to make it work with the goal of restoring dignity to the Zimbabwean people. He had sought to persuade the world and his domestic constituencies that the Inclusive Government offered hope, and he had defended the government and proclaimed the GPA process as "irreversible." In so doing he had put his personal and political credibility on the line. But ZANU-PF was taking him for a ride.

¶5. (SBU) Tsvangirai said the Bennett issue had exposed the "fiction of credibility" of ZANU-PF which was an "unreliable and unrepentant" partner that was incapable of a paradigm shift. He went on to detail ZANU-PF's failure to comply with the GPA:

--Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor Gideon Gono and Attorney General Johannes Tomana, despite illegal appointments, are still in place;
--The government is not fully constituted as Roy Bennett has not been sworn in as deputy secretary of agriculture;
--There has been no review of ministerial appointments as required by the GPA;
--The security apparatus behaves as if the old order still exists. The National Security Council, created by the GPA, has met only once--for an introductory meeting. The Joint as met only once--for an introductory meeting. The Joint Operations Command (comprised primarily of the service chiefs and minister of defense Emmerson Mnangagwa) continues to meet;
--Militarization of rural areas is occurring, and bases to coordinate violence are being established;
--Over 16,000 youths are on the government payroll and are engaging in intimidation and violence in rural areas;
--Seven MDC MPs have been convicted on dubious charges, and others are facing trial;
--The State media continues to engage in hate speech and refuses to accept the MDC;

MDC Disengagement from ZANU-PF

¶6. (SBU) Noting that the MDC had in fact won the 2008 election, and had compromised with ZANU-PF for the good of the Zimbabwean people by entering into a coalition government, Tsvangirai said it was now time for the MDC to assert itself as the dominant party. The MDC would exercise its right to disengage from a "dishonest and unreliable" partner. It would cease to meet with ZANU-PF in Cabinet or in the Council of Ministers. (NOTE: Tsvangirai explained that "disengagement" would be at the executive level; the MDC would continue to participate in Parliament. END NOTE.) Tsvangirai underscored that the MDC had no intention of leaving government, but would continue working to serve the Zimbabwean people.

¶7. (SBU) Tsvangirai said the MDC would renegotiate the GPA with ZANU-PF with the goal of achieving substantial fulfillment of the GPA. But ZANU-PF would need to show seriousness and commitment to the GPA. If this did not occur, however, and the constitutional crisis escalated, the MDC would push for elections conducted by SADC and the AU with UN supervision.

MDC-M on Board?

¶8. (SBU) Tsvangirai said MDC-M was an independent party and MDC-T had explained their stance to MDC-M leaders. He did not say whether MDC-M would support them. (NOTE: MDC-M leader Arthur Mutambara today told us his party had condemned the rearrest of Bennett and advocated his swearing-in as deputy minister of agriculture. He declined to say whether they would support disengagement from ZANU-PF. END NOTE.)

Reaching out to the International Community

¶9. (SBU) Tsvangirai said his next step would be to brief the GPA guarantors (SADC) and selective countries in the region. He urged the international community to continue to call for full implementation of the GPA, but, without specifying how, asked that progress be rewarded.

Easy on Mugabe

¶10. (SBU) In his prepared remarks, and in his responses to questions, Tsvangirai did not, until the end, mention Mugabe. He was finally asked about his working relationship with Mugabe. He responded that if the spirit of compatibility of the three principles--Mugabe, Tsvangirai, and Mutambara--cascaded to lower ranks of government there would be more progress. In response to a follow-up question by the Charge, Tsvangirai admitted that Mugabe had a responsibility to control ZANU-PF party structures.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) Tsvangirai was unusually forceful and direct, and it is unclear how ZANU-PF will react. We suspect that Mugabe will meet with Tsvangirai and concede on some of the GPA issues. Tsvangirai's commitment to remain in government enough for an MDC decision to reengage. The bottom line is that it is highly unlikely that MDC-T will withdraw from government and cause its collapse.

¶12. (C) Tsvangirai appears to have established a bond of sorts with Mugabe, and therefore blames those around Mugabe rather than Mugabe himself for the lack of GPA progress. While Mugabe does not have total control, we have no doubt he could do much more to fulfill the GPA and get the government on track.

PETTERSON